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TOWARDS

An Accurate Biography of

CHARLES AUGUSTE DE BÉRIOT

AND

MARIA FELICITA MALIBRAN-GARCIA;

Extracted from the Correspondence of the former.

BY

EDWARD HERON-ALLEN.

Reprinted from "The Violin Times."

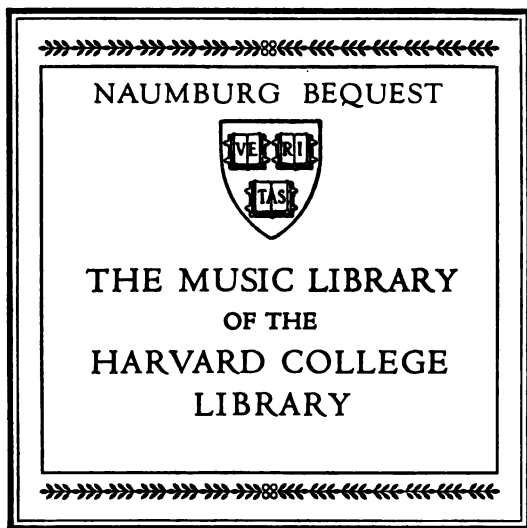
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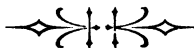
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S. H. L.



No. I.

Bruxelles, le 24 fevrier, 1832.

MON CHER LOUIS,

Il est hasardeux pour Maria de répondre affirmativement à la demande présente (*sic*) de ces Messieurs, mais puisque vous me demandez de leurs part une réponse courrier par courrier, Maria me charge de vous dire qu'elle s'engage à être de retour avant la fin de Mars, et à jouer pendant tout le mois d'Avril aux Italiens. Voici seulement quelles sont les modifications qu'elle voudrait aux conditions du dernier engagement: 16,000 fr. pour tout le mois dont la moitié lui sera payée d'avance et l'autre moitié à la fin de l'engagement. Elle s'engage à jouer deux fois par semaine et trois fois lorsque sa santé le lui permettra.

Si vous m'aviez écrit cette lettre quinze jours plus tard il est probable que je vous eusse répondu en personne, car je compte être à Paris bientôt pour les arrangements de la maison.

Adieu, mon cher ami, je n'ai pas le temps de vous écrire plus longuement avant le depart de la poste. Je finis à la hâte et vous embrasse de tout cœur.

Su amigo de corazon,

CAROLOS DE BERIOT.

Mille amitiés de Maria et de Constance.

(RIDER.)

Pour assurer la bonne intention qu'a Maria de jouer trois fois par semaine et pour éviter à cet egard tout espèce de different, elle consentirait à s'engager positivement à trois représentations par semaine en se reservant le droit d'en manquer une moyennant une retenue de mille francs sur les seize mille francs d'engagement total. Voici un arrangement qui conviendrait peut-être mieux à l'administration et plus dans le système du passé. Ce serait 1,500 fr. par représentation au lieu de 1.250. en conservant toutes les autres conditions.

Non

5/20/65

Mac

TRANSLATION.

Brussels, 24 February, 1832.

MY DEAR LOUIS.

It is risky for Maria to answer in the affirmative to the pressing request of these gentlemen, but as you ask me on their behalf, to give you an answer by return of post, Maria instructs me to tell you that she undertakes to be back again before the end of March, and to play during the whole of April at the "Italiens." The following are the only modifications of the conditions of her last engagement that she would require : 16,000 francs for the whole month, of which half shall be paid to her in advance, and half at the termination of the engagement. She undertakes to play twice a week, and three times when her health will permit it.

If you had written your letter a fortnight later it is probable that I would have answered it in person, for I hope to be in Paris soon to get the house in order.

Good-bye, my dear friend : I have not time to write to you at greater length before post-time. I conclude in haste, embracing you heartily.

Your heart's friend,

CAROLOS DE BERIOT.

A thousand good wishes from Maria and Constance.

The letter contains a loose slip upon which is written as follows :—

To guarantee the genuineness of Maria's intention to play three times a week, and to obviate any unpleasantness on this account, she would consent to bind herself positively to play three times a week, reserving the right to miss one performance on payment of (or forfeit of) 1,000 out of the 16,000 francs for the whole engagement. This is an arrangement which might suit the Directors better, and is more in accordance with our former practice. It comes to 1,500 francs for each performance instead of 1,250, the other terms remaining the same.

The letter is addressed to "Mons. L. Viardot, rue Grange battelière 14, Paris," and is post-marked, "Brussels, 25th February, 1832."

This is a most interesting letter dating as it does from the early days of that romantic liaison which linked together the lives of Maria Malibran-Garcia and Charles Auguste de Bériot. We are not concerned at this present with the early lives of either of them beyond recording that Malibran was born 24 March 1808, in Paris and de Bériot 20 February, 1802; that Maria Garcia married the merchant Malibran, 25 March, 1826, twenty-four days after de Bériot had been elected "*Violon de la chambre de sa Majesté le Roi de France*," and Solo-Violinist to William I. King of Belgium and the Netherlands. The Revolution of 1830 put an end to this latter appointment and de Bériot came to Paris. Here he met Madame Malibran whose husband had gone bankrupt and left for America three years before, and that companionship commenced which terminated only with her death. In 1831 they went to live in Brussels together, and shortly afterwards built themselves a beautiful house at Ixelles a suburb of the Belgian capital. As we see by this letter in February 1832, Malibran meditated an engagement in Paris during the coming April, but the cholera broke out immediately after, and, instead of going to Paris, she and de Bériot started at a few hours' notice on that sudden and celebrated tour of Italy with tablache, of which so many records are preserved. The terms which she commanded even at this date, though moderate compared to her later salaries, were enormous for those days. Before her death she signed an agreement with the Duke Visconti to sing 185 times at La Scala (Milan) for 450,000 francs. De Bériot and Malibran returned to Brussels in December 1832 and it was here in 1833 that her son Charles Wilfrid de Bériot was born (February 12th.)

Later in 1833 Malibran and de Bériot were in London, returning to Italy in the autumn of that year. In 1834 she was again in London for a short season and it was whilst passing through Paris on her way here that she met young Julius Benedict, and persuaded him to come with them to London, where he made his first recorded public appearance at a concert given by de Bériot, and where from that moment he practically passed the rest of his life. Some biographers have said that it was on their return from Naples to Paris in 1835 that this took place, but the recorded events of the lives of Malibran, de Bériot and Benedict, are hopelessly vague and contradictory.

In 1834 she was back in Italy and her engagement with Barbaja at Naples where she arrived, as we see from the immediately following letter, on the 5th November, commenced. Some of the incidents of that engagement are dealt with in the next letter but one.

The above letter (1832) was written to Louis Viardot the impresario and founder of the *Révue Indépendante*, who gave Malibran's sister, Pauline Garcia, her first important engagement in Paris in 1839, and married her in 1840.

No. II.

Postmarked Naples, 8th November, 1834. Milano,
November, 16th.

The first portion of this letter is missing.

Nous avons vu ici "les Capuleti" par la Ronzi et la Tacchinardi. La première chante bien, mais avec la voix d'un petit gargon, ce qui forme un contraste assez drôle avec sa tournure monstrueuse dans le rôle de Romeo. Le public Napolitain est toujours aussi impitoyablement froid qu'il était. C'est une masse inerte qui ne donne signe de vie que lorsqu'un chat passe sur la scène, ou lorsque quelqu'accroc dans les changements du décor lui fournit un prétexte pour rire. Je vous donnerai sur le théâtre de plus amples détails dans ma prochaine, après le début de Maria. Nous sommes arrivés à bon port à Naples le 5-9 bre après avoir passé par Florence et Rome.

Vous avez sans doute appris que Lunari a été dévalisé sur la route de Rome à Naples, entre Fondi et Terracina. Il était avec sa femme et sa fille. Les voleurs après leur avoir mis le pistolet sur la gorge et les avoir couché par terre, leur ont pris tout ce qu'ils possédaient, argent, bijoux &c., &c. Les mêmes voleurs ont été pris par 25 gendarmes. Ils étaient au nombre de 4, trois ont été tués, le quatrième sera exécuté dans peu. Ils ont fait une longue résistance et un gendarme a été tué d'un coup de fusil. Nous avons passé dans ce même endroit pendant la nuit mais avec une escorte de trois hommes armés jusqu'aux dents.

Adieu, mon cher Parola, donnez nous bientôt de vos nouvelles et croyez à notre amitié bien sincère. Soyez

notre interprete aupres de Mons. le Duc et Mdme. la Duchesse.

Votre bien devoué,

CHARLES.

Rappelez nous au souvenir de Mdme. votre epouse, ainsi que de Bassi, don *Cicc.* &c , &c.

A quoi en est notre opera, "La Cantatrice"?

Addressed,

Monsieur l'Avocat PAROLA,
chez Monseigneur le Duc Visconti,
Milan.

TRANSLATION.

We have seen here "The Capulets" by Mesdames Ronzi and Tacchinardi. The first sings well but with a voice like a little boy, which contrasts drolly with her enormous figure in the part of Romeo. The Neapolitan public is as mercilessly cold as ever; they are an inert mass which only gives signs of life when a cat crosses the stage or a hitch in the scene-shifting gives it an excuse to laugh.

I will give you fuller details about the theatre in my next letter when Maria has made her first appearance. We arrived safely at Naples on the 5th November, having come by Florence and Rome.

You have heard, no doubt that Lunari has been cleaned out on the road from Rome to Naples, between Fondi and Terracina. He was with his wife and daughter. The robbers, having put a pistol to their throats and laid them down on the ground, took from them everything they possessed, money, jewels, &c. These same robbers have been captured by 25 policemen. There were four of them; three were killed, the fourth is shortly to be executed. They made a stubborn resistance and a policeman was killed by a gunshot. We passed over the same ground during the night, but with an escort of three men armed to the teeth.

Good-bye, my dear Parola, let us hear from you soon and believe in our very sincere friendship. Convey these sentiments to the duke and the duchess.

Your very devoted

CHARLES.

Remember us to your wife, as also de Bassi, don *Cicc.* &c., &c. How is our opera getting on, "The Cantatrice"?

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This, though only a fragment, is a very interesting fragment, as it fixes the hitherto very nebulous date of Malibran's arrival in Naples. She made her début, as is recorded later on, at the Fondo with Donzelli in "Otello," and played in Rossi's "Amelia" on the 4th December, 1834. I do not know whether de Bériot wrote again to Parola between this date (8th November, 1834) and that of the succeeding letter (3rd February, 1835). In a letter written by Malibran to Madame la Comtesse de Merlin from Naples at this time she alludes to the unwieldy figure of Madame Ronzi, stating that at Naples she (Malibran) "is *too thin* to succeed." (Malibran Memoirs, London, 1840, vol 1, p. 172.) It will be more convenient to discuss this letter and the references to Mesdames Ronzi and Tacchinardi whilst considering the next and more important letter.

What de Bériot means by his reference to "our opera: La Cantatrice," I am at a loss to imagine.

No. III.

Naples. le 3 Fevrier, 1835.

MON CHER PAROLA,

L'opéra de Persiani, "l'Ines de Castro," a eu sa première représentation Mercredi passé. Je vous en ai promis une petite relation. Je me mets donc à l'œuvre pour le courrier de ce soir. Cet ouvrage est décidément superbe d'un bout à l'autre, et a obtenu un succès complet, succès d'autant plus méritoire à Naples que depuis 15 ans environ c'est le troisième opéra qui ait réussi, savoir, "l'Esule di Roma," "l'Ultimo giorno di Pompei," et ce dernier, tous les autres ont été sifflés impitoyablement.

Ines de Castro est un opéra largement taillé pour l'effet d'un grand théâtre. Il n'y a pas un morceau de faible, il y a surtout une scène du Terzetto dans le 2d acte, qui arrache les larmes. C'est le moment où Ines embrasse ses enfants pour ne plus les revoir. Le rôle d'Ines est un des plus beaux du repertoire de Mariette. Celui du Tenor, dont Dupres s'est tiré avec beaucoup d'honneur, est aussi très soigné. En somme totale, c'est un superbe opéra; mais, mon cher Parola, dans un pays où les chefs-d'œuvres de Rossini ont été sifflés les uns après les autres, je me demande si le mérite seule d'un com-

positeur est la cause à laquelle il faut attribuer le succès d'un ouvrage? . . . non sans doute, et pour vous expliquer la réussite d'Ines de Castro je vous dirai que si l'on pouvait lever le voile qui couvre ce mystère, on y verrait d'abord 50 ducats dans la poche du chef d'orchestre, sans lesquels ce Monsieur est incapable de bienveillance pour l'auteur, de zèle et d'attention aux répétitions et enfin d'ensemble, et de mesure dans son orchestre, on verrait en second lieu un (*sic*) autre somme à peu près semblable dans la poche du chef des chœurs sans laquelle les choristes (*sic*) n'ont pas de poumons. On verrait que le tailleur même reçoit sous main son petit cadeau sans lequel les acteurs seraient habillés comme des cochons, et l'opéra retardé de plus d'un mois. En un mot tout s'achète ici parce que tout est à vendre, amitié, bienveillance, complaisance, tout se réduit à cette balance: *combien me donnez-vous pour cela?* Le silence même s'achète au théâtre, ce silence dans les coulisses est ici un objet de spéculation, et le pauvre auteur qui ne passe pas par toutes ces conditions trouve contre lui mille armes qui doivent infailliblement le faire succomber. Persiani a eu le bon sens de prévenir tous ces obstacles, aussi on dit que le pauvre diable a sacrifié entièrement le produit de son opéra; aussi contre l'usage de St. Carlo, il y avait de l'ensemble dans l'exécution, du luxe dans les costumes et les decorations, et autant Amélia était-elle couverte de haillons autant Ines de Castro était resplendissante de dorures et de richesses. Tout cela, mon cher ami, est bien avilissant. Mais c'est la vérité. J'en suis tellement dégouté que j'attends le jour où je quitterais Naples pour n'y plus revenir comme le plus beau jour de ma vie. Encore un mot sur Ines; le succès de cet opéra auquel personne ne s'attendait a blessé mortellement deux partis, les Ronzistes à cause de Maria, les Barbaïstes à cause de la société. qu'a-t-on fait pour paralyser entièrement l'effet de cette musique?

On a décrété hier un ordre qui empêche d'applaudir plus d'une fois et de rappeler plus d'une fois les acteurs. Il en est résulté que la représentation d'hier qui était la troisième d'Ines comprimée par quelques gendarmes s'est réduit à une représentation ordinaire de tous les jours—Maria en pleurait—car rien ne lui est plus à cœur que d'exciter l'enthousiasme du public, c'est en effet la seule récompense

d'une véritable artiste: moi je ne cesse de lui répéter que rien ne peut constater mieux un triomphe que l'obligation d'envoyer la force pour la comprimer. J'attends toujours avec impatience une décision de Paris. Troupenas m'a écrit mais sa lettre ne m'annonce rien de nouveau. La chose sera jugée très prochainement voilà tout. J'ai écrit à Lucca et je suis aussi dans l'attente d'une réponse de ce côté. J'espère pouvoir vous donner bientôt du nouveau, en attendant, je vous réitère nos amitiés bien sincères et vous prie d'être notre interprète auprès du Duc et de Mme. la Duchesse.

CARLO D. B.

P.S.—Nos compliments d'amitié à Bassi, D. Cicio, etc. Je pense que l'affaire de Rossi se terminera à Venise, car à Naples nous ne serons plus à temps de prêter serment en sa présence.

La Tacchinardi est, je crois, engagée pour Paris.

Le bruit absurde des coups de poignards a été jusqu'à Paris, les journaux français en parlent avec une arrogante certitude. On devait ici donner l'opéra de Bellini, *Les Puritains*; la partition n'est pas encore arrivée de sorte que le marché de Bellini avec la société est rompu non seulement pour cet ouvrage mais pour les deux autres qu'il devait écrire l'année prochaine. Il s'agissait de 9,000 ducats pour les trois opéras. Je vous dis cela dans le cas où M. le Duc voulut reprendre le marché de la société, je crois que ce serait une bonne opération.

Addressed:—

Monsieur l'Avocat PAROLA,

Palais de Mons. le Duc Visconti,

Milan.

Postmarked:—

Naples, 5th February.

Milano, 10th February.

TRANSLATION.

Naples, 3rd February, 1835.

MY DEAR PAROLA,

Persiani's opera "Inez de Castro" was produced for the first time on Wednesday last. I promised you a short account of the performance. I set to work then for this evening's post. This opera is decidedly superb from beginning to end, and has proved a complete success—a success the more

praiseworthy at Naples seeing that during the last 15 years about, it is only the third opera which has succeeded, to wit, "L'Esule di Roma," "L'Ultimo giorno di Pompei," and this last, all the others have been mercilessly hissed.

"Inez de Castro" is an opera constructed on broad lines to be effective in a large theatre; there is not a weak number in it, above all there is a scene, a trio in the second act which compels one's tears—it is the moment when Inez embraces her children for the last time. The part of Inez is one of the finest in Marriette's repertoire, the tenor part which Dupres performed most creditably is also very carefully constructed. In fine it is a superb opera; but, my dear Parola, in a country where the masterpieces of Rossini have been hissed off the stage one after another, I ask myself whether the unassisted talent of a composer is the only cause to which the success of a work is attributable?—, without doubt, no, and to explain to you the success of "Inez de Castro," I may tell you that if one could lift the veil which covers this mystery, one would find: first of all, 50 ducats in the pocket of the conductor of the orchestra, without which this gentleman would be incapable of any kindly feeling for the author, of zeal or attention at rehearsals, in fact of inspiring unison and time in his orchestra; in the second place one would find a nearly similar sum in the pocket of the chorus-master without which the chorus-singers would have no lungs. One would find that even the costumier receives his little present, without which the actors would be arrayed like swine, and the production delayed a month. In one word everything has to be bought here because everything is for sale, friendship, kindness, complaisance, everything is reduced to this test, *What will you give me for that?* Even silence has to be bought in the theatre. Silence behind the scenes is an object of commercial enterprise, and the poor author who does not submit himself to all these requirements, finds arrayed against him a thousand weapons which must infallibly cause him to succumb. Persiani has had the good sense to foresee all these obstacles, and it is said that in doing it the poor devil has sacrificed the whole proceeds of his opera. In addition, contrary to custom at the San Carlo, there was cohesion in the performance, luxury in the costumes and decorations, and

"Inez de Castro" was as resplendent in gold and magnificence as "Amelia" was covered with rags. All this, my dear friends, is very degrading, but it is the truth. I am so disgusted with it that I look forward to the day when I shall quit Naples never to return, as the happiest day of my life. To return to Inez, the success of this opera which is quite unexpected has mortally offended two parties, the Ronzists on account of Maria, and the Barbaistes on account of the subscribers. What do you think they did for the purpose of paralysing the effect of this music? They issued an order yesterday forbidding people to applaud more than once, or to recall the actors more than once. The result of this was that yesterday's performance which was the third representation of Inez, controlled by some policemen, was reduced to the level of an ordinary everyday performance. Maria cried about it, for nothing is dearer to her than to rouse the enthusiasm of the public, it is in fact the only reward of a true artist; I keep on telling her that nothing can prove the greatness of her triumph more than the fact that it is necessary to employ force to control it. I am still waiting impatiently for a decision from Paris. I have heard from Troupenas, but his letter contains nothing that is new. The matter will be decided very soon, that is all. I have written to Lucca, and I am also waiting a reply from thence. I hope to be able to give you fresh tidings very soon, meanwhile I reiterate to you our expressions of friendship and beg you to convey them to the Duke and the Duchess.

CARLO D. B.

P.S.—Our compliments and friendship to Bassi, D. Cicio, &c. I think that Rossi's matter will be ended at Venice, as at Naples we shall not be in time to make declaration in his presence. I think Mme. Tacchinardi is engaged for Paris.

The absurd rumour about the stabbing has reached as far as Paris; the French papers talk about it with arrogant certainty. They proposed giving Bellini's opera, "I Puritani," here, but the score has not yet arrived, and consequently Bellini's business relations with the society are broken off, not only as regards this work, but also as regards the two others which he was to write next year. The arrangement was 9,000 ducats for the three operas. I mention this in case the Duke would like to take up the matter.

where the society had dropped it; I think it would be a good speculation.

I trust that this letter may set at rest for ever the mis-statement, published by Fétis and Sir G. Grove in more than one place and after them by every other biographer, that Persiani's "Inez de Castro" was first produced by Malibran in August, 1835, at Lucca. In addition to deciding this point, it throws a most interesting light on the manner in which music was treated, or rather maltreated, at the San Carlo in 1835. and shows that the disgraceful way in which the artistes are bullied at that house to day is the survival of an historic custom. "L'Esule di Roma" was written by Donizetti and produced in Naples about 1820, and "L'ultimo Giorno di Pompei" was written by Giovanni Pacini and produced about five years later. "Dupres," whom de Bériot refers to as singing the tenor part, is Gilbert Louis Duprez (born in Paris 6th December, 1806), who, after reaching the higher walks of his profession at the Opera Comique in Paris, went, about 1831, to Naples, where he sang until 1836, when he reached the summit of his ambition, being engaged for the opera in Paris. The terms "Ronzistes" and "Barbaistes" require some explanation. Signorina Josephine Ronzi (who married the comedian De Begnis) was a leading Italian prima donna, who had been attached to the San Carlo since 1831, and had been, during that time, the leading Neapolitan singer. Malibran, on arriving in Naples, found that all her leading parts were being sung at the San Carlo by Ronzi, and consequently made her debut in Naples as Desdemona at the Fondo. It is also stated that Ronzi was the mistress of the King of Naples, and that this militated against Malibran's success. However this may have been, it is easily comprehensible that the popular favourite should have a large body of friends who would look coldly on the new comer. The "Barbaistes" were the friends of the manager Barbaja as differentiated from the subscribers (la Société). Domenico Barbaja began life as a restaurant waiter at Naples, continued it as director of the San Carlo Theatre, and ended it in wealthy retirement at Posilipo. Grove says that he was at the same time manager of La Scala, Milan, and the San Carlo at Naples, but I see no confirmation of this

statement. The Comtesse de Merlin states that he was also manager of the Fondo, and that the subscribers to the San Carlo were offended that Malibran appeared first at the other opera house. This may explain de Bériot's remark about "la Société," which is a trifle obscure and capable of more than one interpretation.

By "Amelia" in the preceding passage de Bériot refers to the title rôle in the opera of that name, written for Barbaja by Rossi, at Malibran's request, and produced at the San Carlo on the 4th December, 1834. This was a comic part in which she insisted on having a dance interpolated, which dance was a great failure, and damned the opera.

The decision from Paris that de Bériot awaits with such anxiety is the decision of the Parisian courts as to the nullification of her marriage with Malibran. This, as we shall see, was not pronounced until the 6th March, 1836.

Troupenas was de Bériot's friend and publisher referred to later on.

The letter he awaited from Lucca was with reference to Malibran's next engagement, which began in August, 1835. It is there that all her biographers have placed her triumph in "Inez de Castro"—even Madame de Merlin, who professes to get her information direct from Malibran herself.

The Duke and Duchess are of course, the Duke and Duchess Visconti, to whose house the letter is addressed. The Duke Visconti was the director of La Scala, with whom Malibran subsequently contracted to sing during 1835-6-7 for £16,800 for 180 (or 185) performances, a remuneration which compares curiously with salaries paid nowadays.

Signor Parola, to whom this, the preceding, and the following letters are written, was a Milanese barrister, who appears to have acted as the agent of the Duke Visconti in engaging artists for La Scala. He was always a very great friend, both of de Bériot and Malibran. This further explains the final postscript to this letter,

The Bassi referred to in the postscript, it probably Vincenzo Bassi, a bass singer of secondary reputation, who at this time was singing at Milan. Cicio referred to in both the preceding letters with the prefix "don," I have been unable to trace, but he was probably another artist at La Scala.

The postscript relative to the "stabbing," refers to Malibran's death scene in "Otello." She never played this twice alike, and Donzelli, who played the title role, never knew how he was going to catch her. It imparted great realism to the scene, but it annoyed Donzelli very much, and on one occasion he slightly wounded himself with his dagger whilst pursuing her round the stage. The incident was caught up and elaborated by the French press until it assumed the proportions of a nightly repeated attempt to murder her at the instigation of her Neapolitan enemies.

I do not know what is referred to by "l'affaire de Rossi"; disgusted by the failure of "Amelia," Rossi left Europe for Mexico on the 15th October, 1835, where he stayed until 1841. It is quite possible that de Bériot refers to some dispute or unpleasantness arising out of the failure of "Amelia."

In speaking of "La Tacchinardi" de Bériot refers to Madame Persiani, the daughter of Nicolo Tacchinardi, the Italian tenor, who had so perfect a voice that it made up for his ugliness and deformity which are said to have been monstrous. His daughter Francesca, who was a pupil of his, and an opera singer of considerable repute, married Persiani, the composer of "Inez de Castro," in 1830, and was singing in Naples till 1835. Donizetti had written his "Lucia di Lammermoor" for her in 1834, and it was in this that she made her first appearance in Paris in 1837 (December 12th), according to Sir G. Grove (Fétis gives a totally different account). It is very interesting to note from this letter the cause which led to "I Puritani," being produced for the benefit of Madame Grisi in London, in 1835, instead of in Naples.

The Duke Visconti did not take de Bériot's hint: the other two operas were never written; "I Puritani" was Bellini's last work—he died on the 23rd September, 1835, aged 29.

No. IV.

Louvain, le 16 Mars, 1838.

MON CHER PAROLA,

Je profite du passage de M. Bruschetti pour vous donner de mes nouvelles après un bien long silence dont vous devez sans doute m'en vouloir, mais vous savez combien j'ai eu l'esprit bouleversé et le cœur malade. J'ai quelque droit à votre indulgence,

car malgré tous mes chagrins je n'ai cessé de penser à vous. M. Bruschetti veut bien se charger de vous remettre un petit cœur renfermant une relique dont je suis bien avare, comme vous pensez, et que je ne donne qu'aux vrais amis de mon pauvre ange.

J'avais projeté un long voyage dans le nord, mais j'ai été malade pendant presque tout l'hiver. Cependant je compte partir dans peu avec ma belle-sœur et sa mère pour Vienne, et peut être même pour Milan où j'aurais un bien grand plaisir de vous revoir. M. Bruschetti entendra Pauline ce soir (car nous donnons un concert à Louvain) il vous en dira assez sur ce talent qui deviendra immense.

Adieu, mon cher ami, le temps qui me presse m'empêche de vous écrire plus longuement. Mille amitiés pour vous et votre femme.

C. DE BÉRIOT.

Ecrivez moi un mot à l'adresse ci-dessous :—

à Ixelles, près de Bruxelles.

Note by Parola :—

Rispondo il gno 8,

Aprile, 1838.

Addressed :—

Monsieur PAROLA,
Milan.

TRANSLATION.

Louvain, 16th March, 1838.

MY DEAR PAROLA,

I take advantage of Mr. Bruschetti's passage to send you news of myself after a very long silence, for which you must, no doubt, be annoyed with me, but you know how overwhelmed I have been and how sick at heart. I have some claim on your indulgence, for notwithstanding all my sorrows, I have not ceased to think of you. Mr. Bruschetti is kind enough to undertake to hand you a little heart containing a relic of which I am most avaricious, as you may suppose, and which I only give to the true friends of my poor angel.

I had contemplated a long voyage in the north, but I have been ill nearly all the winter. Nevertheless I count on starting shortly, with my sister-in-law and her mother, for Vienna, and possibly for Milan, where it will give me great pleasure to see you again. Mr. Bruschetti will hear Pauline this evening (for we are giving a concert at Louvain) he will tell you quite enough about this (her) talent, which will become immense.

Good bye, my dear friend, want of time prevents my writing to you at greater length. A thousand remembrances to you and your wife.

C. DE BÉRIOT.

Write me a line to the address below :—
Ixelles, near Bruxelles.

The great interest of this letter lies in the fact that it throws a light on the dark ages of de Bériot's life, a period on which his biographers have been practically silent, and introduce to us Pauline Garcia. On the 6th of March, 1836, Malibran's marriage was annulled by the French courts (owing to a technical flaw in the ceremony, which was improperly performed by the French consul in New York), and on the 26th March following, she was married in Brussels to de Bériot; a few months later they came to England where, whilst singing at the Manchester Festival, she was taken suddenly ill, and died after nine days' illness, on the 23rd September. M. Ernest Legouvé has graphically described her death in his short biography of Malibran, though it like all other biographies of her, is strangely incorrect and fanciful. After this de Bériot retired to Ixelles, where it is stated by Grove and Fétis he lived in seclusion till 1840. This is, however, incorrect. Madame Garcia, the mother of Malibran, and her sister, Pauline Garcia lived in Brussels, naturally on terms of great intimacy with de Bériot, and in 1837 we find him playing at a concert at which Pauline made her *début* as a singer. This young lady, born in 1821 (18th July) was 13 years younger than Maria Garcia and had, during her sister's life-time, given great promise as a singer. After a short tour with de Bériot, she returned to Brussels, and we see from the above letter that in 1838 she was performing in a concert at Louvain, which was de Bériot's native place, and that a tour of Germany and Italy with him was in contemplation. Nothing of this appears in any of the published biographies of de Bériot. The joint tour did not, however, take place, for in 1838 Pauline Garcia was singing in Paris at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, in May, 1839, in London at Her Majesty's in "Otello," and in the autumn of the same year was engaged for the Théâtre Lyrique, by Viardot, whom she married in 1840, whilst in the same year de Bériot, touring in Germany, married Mademoiselle Marie Huber, daugh

ter of a Viennese magistrate, an adopted daughter of Prince Dietrichstein Preskau, by whom he had two sons, both of whom died before him, one an officer in the Belgian Army and the other (Franz) a violinist of considerable repute. Pauline Viardot-Garcia (who is the mother of M. Paul Viardot, the violinist and leader of the Paris Opera) still lives in Paris. This letter is written like No. III. to Signor Parola, the Italian barrister and agent of the Duke Visconti.

No. V.

Ixelles, le 21 Août, 1840.

MON CHER JULES,

Depuis quelque temps vous comprendrez qu'il m'a été bien difficile de m'occuper d'affaires et de musique, au milieu de ce tourbillon de délices et d'émotions qu'on appelle mariage. Enfin ce n'est que depuis peu de jours que j'ai un peu repris le goût de l'harmonie, et j'ai fait sur le pré un petit duo, comme un essai que je vous soumetts en remplacement de l'autre. J'ai soigné autant qu'il m'a été possible la partie de piano à laquelle vous donnerez la dernière main. J'ai essayé de jouer ce petit morceau devant quelques personnes avec ma femme et il a fait son effet sans être difficile ni pour l'un ni pour l'autre. Dites moi seulement par un mot si vous en êtes content et s'il est digne de figurer parmi les autres.

Je vous remercie, mon cher ami, des détails que vous m'avez donnés (*sic*) sur les articles de journaux, il en résulte que l'auteur de la brioche, c'est moi, et cela par ma mauvaise mémoire. Je suis bien désolé de tous les désagréments dont j'ai été la cause involontaire, cependant je dois aussi vous gronder un peu de ne pas m'en avoir dit un mot à Paris. Il eût été temps alors de parler à bien des inconvénients, qui me semblent aujourd'hui presque irréparables, si pourtant vous avez un bon avis à me donner je m'y soumettraï volontiers et j'y penserai de mon côté.

Pour en revenir à nos douze petits enfants je vous dirai que le No. 11, sur le thème de Nicolo, ne me semble pas aussi bien que les autres et qu'il serait je crois nécessaire d'en faire un autre. Ce tient à la nature du thème lui même qui est un peu rococo et décoloré. Le morceau est d'ailleurs trop court. J'ai demandé à M. Masset un autre Thème. J'attends.

Je suis, mon cher Jules, bien heureux d'avoir une femme aussi parfaite que Marie ; elle fait la conquête de tous ceux qui l'approchent par la douceur et la simplicité de ses manières. Je fais souvent une observation que vous ferez aussi quand vous la connaîtrez, je lui trouve quelque chose de l'accent de votre femme en parlant le français, il n'y a pourtant pas beaucoup de rapport entre Naples et Vienne.

Je voudrai bien pouvoir aller vous rejoindre soit à Briton (*sic*) soit à Dieppe, mais je n'ose former aucun projet de peur de ne pouvoir le réaliser et vous faire perdre un temps précieux. Je trouve que vous faites bien d'exploiter l'Angleterre mais ne rejetez pas pour cela Paris ; c'est là que tôt ou tard vous reviendrez dépenser vos guinées et faire de nouveaux opéras pour compléter (*sic*) votre réputation. Adieu, cher fiston (?). Je vous embrasse de tout coeur,

Votre ami,

CH. DE BERIOT.

Addressed :—

Monsieur J. BENEDICT,
at MM. Addison & Beale,
Regent Street, Conduit-Street,
London.

TRANSLATION.

Ixelles, 21st August, 1840.

MY DEAR JULES,

You will readily understand that for some time it has been very difficult for me to attend to business or to music in the midst of the whirligig of delights and emotions that they call marriage. In fact, it is only a few days ago that I felt once more in the vein for harmony, and I composed out in the fields a little duet as an experiment, which I submit to you in the place of the other. I have done as much as I can to the piano part, and you will put the finishing touches to it. I played this little piece just to try it before a few people with my wife, and it was effective without being difficult for either of us. Only tell me in a word if you are satisfied with it, and if it is worthy to figure among the others.

I am much obliged to you, my dear friend, for the details you have given me as to the newspaper articles ; I see now that the whole thing is my fault, and is the consequence of my bad memory. I am

very miserable about all the unpleasantness of which I have been the involuntary cause, but at the same time I must scold you a little for not having said a word to me about it when I was in Paris. There would have been time then to prevent so much inconvenience, which seems to me to-day to be practically irreparable; however, if you can give me any good advice in the matter, I will submit myself to it, and give it my best consideration.

To return to our twelve little children, I must tell you that No. 11, on the theme of Nicolo, does not seem to me to be as good as the others, and I think we shall have to make another. It partakes of the character of the theme itself, which is a little old-fashioned and colourless. In addition to this, the piece is too short. I have asked Mr. Masset for a new theme. I am waiting for it. I am, my dear Jules, very happy to have so perfect a wife as Marie; she makes a conquest of everyone who comes near her, by reason of the sweetness and simplicity of her manners. I often remark a thing which you also will remark when you know her. I find her accent in speaking French is something like your wife's and yet there is not much connection between Naples and Vienna.

I should very much like to join you at Brighton or Dieppe, but I do not dare to make any plans for fear of not being able to execute them, and so waste your precious time. I think you do well in cultivating England, but do not, on account of that, abandon Paris—it is there that sooner later you will return to spend your guineas and compose new operas to complete your reputation. Good-bye, my dear fellow, I embrace you with all my heart, your friend.

CH. DE BÉRIOT.

Postmarked:—

Brussels, 22nd August, 1840; and
London, 24th August, 1840.

With this letter, we reach another of the important stages of de Bériot's life, namely his active re-entry into the musical world immediately after his marriage with Mlle. Huber. It is written to Mr. (afterwards Sir Julius) Benedict, which gives it an added interest, for it was owing to the persuasions of de Bériot and Malibran, whom he met in Paris in 1834 or 1835, that he came over to London and settled

here for the rest of his life. The only works that I know of in which de Bériot and Julius Benedict collaborated was a duo on "La Sonnambula," and "Six duos Faciles, le Fruit de l'Etude," which was published in Paris by Brandus. It is possible, however, that this letter refers to the latter six duos. The Masset to whom he refers was the violinist and chef d'orchestre of that name to whom the succeeding letter was written two years later. I have not been able to trace the name of Benedict's first wife, who was a Neapolitan, but she died whilst on a visit to Naples with him in 1851, a few months after his son had been killed by the fall of a chimney on a Saône steam-boat. The concluding paragraph of the letter is particularly significant, when we consider the circumstances of the latter part of Sir Julius Benedict's life in England. It was in this year, 1840, that de Bériot became connected with the Conservatoire of Brussels, but he did not receive his appointment as head of the faculty of the violin until early in 1843, and the circumstances which led to his appointment, which have never been recorded in any of his biographies, are related by himself in the following letter :—

No. VI.

Bruxelles, le 18 8bre, 1842.

MON CHER MASSET,

Aussitôt après mon retour à Bruxelles le Ministre de l'Intérieur m'a fait appeler pour me dire qu'il savait que j'étais sur le point de quitter la Belgique pour aller occuper la place de Baillot, et qu'il espérait que je ne prendrais pas cette résolution avant de lui avoir laissé le temps d'agir. Il est de mon devoir, a-t-il ajouté, de vous retenir dans le pays. J'ignore encore ce qu'il a à me proposer, mais dans cette position délicate, vous comprendrez qu'avant de savoir quelles sont les intentions du Ministre je ne puis donner une réponse catégorique à Paris. Dans tous les cas il n'y a pas de temps de perdu ; Je ne pourrais (*sic*) entrer dans mes fonctions au Conservatoire qu'après avoir mis d'ordre à mes affaires ici, et après m'être installé dans mon nouveau domicile, ce qui n'est pas l'affaire d'un jour.

Avant de répondre affirmativement à Mr. Auber, je désirerais savoir si l'espoir qui m'a été donné relativement à un appartement au conservatoire pourrait (*sic*)

se réaliser, et si ce logement serait assez spacieux pour ma petite famille, et enfin si'il serait dans la partie nouvellement bâtie du Conservatoire. Cette question n'est pas sans importance et je vous serais obligé, mon cher Masset, de prendre quelques informations à cet égard et d'avoir la bonté de m'en faire part

J'ai corrigé l'épreuve de l'air varié, je ne vous l'envoie pas parce que vous m'avez dit que vous vouliez le faire paraître avec le quatuor ou le petit orchestre. Cependant si vous le désirez je vous l'expédierai de suite, sinon je tacherai de terminer la partition le plus promptement possible.

Veuillez bien faire part de ma lettre à Troupenas et lui dire que j'ai dit à Schott *tout ce qu'il fallait pour les études*.

J'attends Thalberg aujourd'hui. Comment va ce pauvre Wolff? Est-il enfin d'aplomb sur ses jambes? J'ai été tellement affairé depuis mon retour que je n'ai pas pu faire la petite *note* dont nous sommes convenus, mais cela ne tardera pas.

Adieu, écrivez moi un mot, et croyez moi
Votre tout dévoué

C. DE BERIOT.

Mille choses aimable pour ma femme et moi à
Mme. Masset.

Addressed :—

Monsieur MASSET,
40, Rue Vivienne, Paris.

TRANSLATION.

Brussels, 18th October, 1842.

MY DEAR MASSET,

Immediately upon my return to Brussels the Minister of the Interior sent for me to tell me that he knew that I was on the point of leaving Belgium to go and take Baillot's place, and that he hoped I would not definitely resolve upon this course without giving him time to act. "It is my duty," he added, "to keep you in the country." I do not yet know what proposition he has to make to me; but, under these delicate circumstances, you will understand that until I know what are the intentions of the minister I cannot send a categorical reply to Paris. In any event there is no time lost. I should not be able to enter upon my duties at the Conservatoire without having

put my affairs here in order, and until I should be settled in my new abode, which is not a matter of a day.

Before replying in the affirmative to M. Auber, I should like to know whether the hope that has been held out to me of a residence in the Conservatoire is likely to be realised, and if this accommodation would be large enough for my little family, and, finally, whether it would be in the newly-built portion of the Conservatoire. This is a not unimportant question, and I should be obliged to you, my dear Masset, if you would make some enquiries on this point and let me know the result.

I have corrected the proof of the air with variations. I do not send it you because you told me you wanted to publish it with (accompaniment of) the quartet or small orchestra. Nevertheless, if you wish it, I will send it to you at once, otherwise I will try to finish the score as soon as possible.

Please communicate the contents of this letter to Troupenas, and tell him that I have said to Schott *all that is necessary about the exercises*.

I expect Thalberg to-day. How is poor Wolff? Is he firmly on his legs again? I have been so busy since my return that I have not been able to write out the little *note* (? bill) as we arranged, but I will not delay about it. Good-bye, write me a line, and believe me,

Your devoted

C. DE BÉRIOT.

A thousand greetings for my wife and myself to
M^{de} Masset.

Postmarked :—

Brussels, 18th October, 1842.

This letter is, as far as I know, the only record extant of the close of the penultimate phase of de Bériot's career. Baillot, who was the leading professor of the violin at the Paris Conservatoire, had died on the 15th September, 1842, just a month before the above letter was written. Auber, who had become Director of the Conservatoire on the retirement of Cherubini in 1841, had immediately put himself into communication with de Bériot (who was then on a concert tour, being merely a professor of the violin at the Conservatoire of Brussels), and offered him the post vacated by the death of Baillot.

This seems to have aroused the dormant appreciation of his fellow-countrymen with the result that he was offered a similar post in Brussels, which post he naturally accepted rather than the other. He retained his position till 1852, when he became blind and retired to Louvain, where he completed his "Grande Methode du Violon," which was published in 1858. The date of his death is variously given as the 8th or 20th of April, 1870, and he left behind him a considerable fortune in the enjoyment of which his son still lives in Paris.

It is impossible to say to which of his many "airs variés" the above letter refers. He speaks of Eugène Troupenas, his friend, and the publisher of many of his compositions. Troupenas was, besides being a music publisher, an ardent amateur and theoretician on the science of music. He died at Paris in 1850 (11th April).

The Schott referred to is of course the publisher of that name.

Thalberg, the pianist, was one of de Bériot's greatest friends, but was *not* his brother-in-law, as Fétis asserts. Thalberg being a natural son and without sisters.

The Wolff of whom mention is made is Edouard Wolff, the pianist, a composer of the most remarkable fecundity. He had evidently met with some accident or illness at this date.

Nicolas Jean Jacques Masset, to whom this letter is written, was a violinist and orchestral leader, who, from 1839 until 1845, was the leading tenor at the Opera Comique in Paris. It would seem from this and other letters, as if he were in the position of agent for de Bériot in Paris.

It will be seen that the six preceding letters throw much light on the lives of De Bériot and those with whom he was associated. There is no really good biography of de Bériot extant; the best perhaps is that of Mr. G. T. Ferris, in his "Sketches of Great Violinists" (De Fid. Bibl. No. 81). The articles in "Groves' Dictionary" and "Fétis' Biography" are vague, unsatisfactory, contradictory, and incorrect. He seems, however, to have been a great letter writer, and it is probable that could more of his letters be recovered an accurate biography of de Bériot might be written.

E. H.-A.

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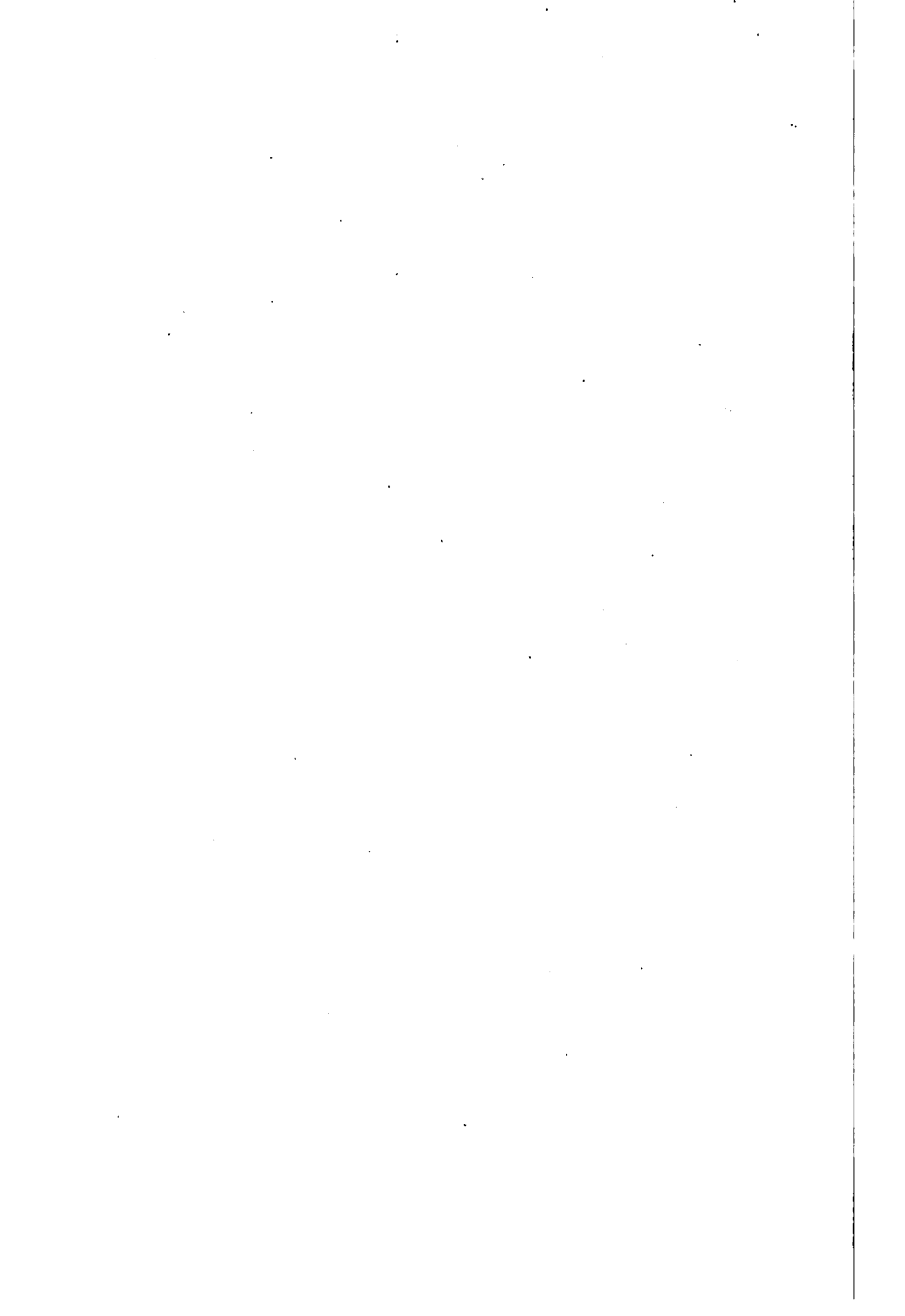
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